Yours Truly
A. R. B.

DR. HUSTON'S
LECTURE INTRODUCTORY
TO THE COURSE ON
MATERIA MEDICA, &c.
IN
JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE,
November 5, 1846.

AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CLASS OF JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE,

NOVEMBER 5, 1846,

BY

ROBERT M. HUSTON, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA AND GENERAL THERAPEUTICS.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA, NOVEMBER 15th, 1846.

Dear Sir,—At a meeting of the Class of the Jefferson Medical College, held on 12th inst., it was *resolved*, that a committee be appointed to request of Professor Huston, a copy of his able and learned Introductory Lecture for publication. We sincerely hope sir, that the wishes of the Class will meet your approbation. Your obedient servants,

T. A. ELIASON, D. C., President,
W. H. TINGLEY, Pa., Secretary,
N. R. BOUTELLE, Me.
G. W. WENTWORTH, N. H.
H. B. TAPPAN, Mass.
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J. M. TRENCHARD, N. J.
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A. L. GAMBLE, Iowa.
H. J. TOOMBS, Florida.
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J. B. ANDERSON, Texas.
J. REID, Canada West,
R. SUTHERLAND, Nova Scotia.
B. ADDISON, N. B.
J. F. NICHOLAS, England.
S. T. CROWLEY, Ireland.
J. DAWSON, Burmah, India.

To Professor R. M. Huston.

PHILADELPHIA, NOVEMBER 23, 1846.

Gentlemen,—I have received your communication of the 16th instant, on behalf of the Class of the Jefferson Medical College, requesting a copy of my Introductory Lecture for publication.

The lecture was hastily written, without any view to its publication; nevertheless, as it is the desire of the members of the Class to possess copies of it, I feel it my duty to yield to their wishes, and shall accordingly take pleasure in placing it at your disposal.

Be pleased, Gentlemen, to convey to those whom you represent, my warm acknowledgments for the honour they have done me on this occasion, and accept for yourselves the assurance of the esteem with which

I am, &c., &c.

R. M. HUSTON.

To MR. T. A. ELIASON,
W. H. TINGLEY,
N. R. BOUTELLE,
G. W. WENTWORTH, &c. &c.
Committee of the Class of J. M. C.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

Gentlemen :—In Philadelphia the first week in November is regarded as the carnival of the medical profession, and you are fortunate in being present at its celebration. The Introductory lectures given at the several schools of medicine are the feasts and enjoyments which precede the more solemn and important duties of the season: of these you have now partaken, and by this time I doubt not are well satiated ;—under this impression, my remarks on the present occasion shall be few and brief.

Notwithstanding the great antiquity of the healing art, the many learned, excellent, and distinguished men who have practised it ; its great utility, benevolent character, and the great amount of positive good it has accomplished, there may be found in almost every community, men of no mean pretensions who deride it; who regard it as so uncertain as to be undeserving of support, and who are willing to cast themselves into the arms of ignorant pretenders and boasters of a single remedy rather than confide in its ministrations. Such, indeed, is their practice. Even in the ranks of the profession itself, men of low, and some of high degree are found, who are willing to concede to the silliest conceits, and the most ridiculous hypotheses, an equality in practical value with the best understood rules of our art. Under these circumstances, it may be excusable in one who believes this to be erroneous and unjust, and whose opinions on the snbject are the result of many years observation and experience in its pursuit, to offer a few strictures on the *reasonableness* of this opposition to legitimate medicine, if only as an apology for his own continued devotion to its interests.

Of late years, so rapid have been the advances of other sciences and the arts, that people may be said to have grown

impatient of everything that stops short of perfection. The certainty, indeed, with which results are obtained where physical laws alone are concerned, is well calculated to lessen our estimate of the value of investigations, where different influences modify and often defeat our anticipations. But, in considerations of this kind, we should always regard the importance of the object, when it will often be found to rise superior to all difficulties, and not unfrequently to derive interest from the very obscurity in which it is enveloped.

Does the traveller contemplate his journey with less interest, because of the dangers to which he will be exposed on the way, or regard its objects as less important to him because of the uncertainty of their accomplishment? Has the mariner less concern for his voyage and its results, because of the uncertainty of the winds on which he depends to waft him to his destination, and of the unseen rocks which may lie in his path? Does the husbandman feel less interest in his crop, because the grain which he commits to the ground may not vegetate, or the sun ripen it for the harvest; and are his labours less important to his family and the community on account of the many causes of failure to which they are exposed? How many are the occasions in which human plans and efforts are rendered fruitless by an inscrutable Providence, without their being deemed ill-judged and worthless; and why, in medicine, should a less liberal rule be observed in estimating its value than in the other affairs of life? Is it nothing to be sick and to suffer, and are the results of diseases always certain or salutary when left to nature, or when entrusted to the management of an uninstructed empiric?

These are serious questions, which should be answered, and answered satisfactorily, before discarding the accumulated experience of ages which is embodied in the judicious application of the rules of our art. If the practice of medicine be objected to on the ground of uncertainty in its results, a like objection may be made to most of the pursuits of life. Fallibility pertains to every thing that is human.

How is it with the other learned professions—of law and divinity? The principles of law are those of justice between man and man. They have been written by the finger of God in the pages of the Bible, and in the consciences of men, and yet legislators find occasion continually to make new enactments for the purpose of applying those principles to the new cases that arise in the progress of society. These enactments consist for the most part of simple declarations, generally in the vernacular language of those for whom they are made, and might, therefore, be thought to be of easy comprehension; and still, how many and constant are the disputes to which they give rise! Learned men are appointed to expound them; and even these disagree! What one court decrees, another and higher in authority annuls—until "the glorious uncertainty of the law" has become the commonest of proverbs. Would any one therefore stop all legislation, abrogate all courts, put an end to all trials by jury, and live without law in the world?

And what has the other learned profession accomplished? Is theology improved? Is not the Gospel the same simple, sublime and intelligible history of God's acts, commands and promises, that it was in the days of the Apostles? Have all the learning and talents of the commentators rendered any part of that history clearer, its commands more authoritative, or its promises more gracious and satisfactory? Have the teachings of the doctors, the denunciations of the pulpit, or the prayers of the pious, banished sin from the world and made christianity everywhere abound? Shall we then turn our backs upon the preacher, stop our ears to his exhortations and reproof, and close our houses for worship—or shall we blindly submit ourselves to the rantings of every wild enthusiast or base impostor that may pretend to a grand discovery or special revelation in religion?

Such indeed,—and I speak it with regret and deep humiliation,—is the practice in regard to our art of many who are viewed as shining lights in the world—men whose learning

and general intelligence should guard them against imposture, and teach them greater circumspection in the example they set to those who habitually look up to them as patterns for imitation.

Nothing, I confess, has astonished me more than the instances of credulity continually exhibited on this subject, by men of great moral worth and general intelligence,—men, who in any other matter would reject an irrational proposition as an insult to their understanding,—who would spurn boastful ignorance and unblushing pretence as something to be loathed,—and yet, nevertheless, surrender themselves, body and conscience, into the keeping of the veriest fools or vilest knaves in creation, when they approach them in the capacity of a medical empiric!

To the honor of the profession of the law be it said, that the instances in which any of its distinguished members countenance quackery in medicine are comparatively rare. Their acquaintance with the laws of evidence enables them to detect the shallowness of the arguments by which those of less disciplined minds are entrapped.

I wish it were in my power to say as much of the clergy,—a class whose influence on the masses of society is vastly greater, from the intimate relations that exist between them and their fellow citizens in private and family circles,—a class whose lives are especially devoted to the best interests of their fellow-men, and among the members of which, in all ages, learning and science have had their ablest patrons and most devoted cultivators. And yet, from clergymen of various denominations, the vilest impostors and pretenders in medicine have received their most efficient support. It would seem as if the "charity which covereth a multitude of sins," forbids them to suspect imposture in matters so sacred. Unaccustomed to the traffic and employments of ordinary life, they often know but little of the artifices too frequently practised to obtain success, and thus become the dupes of a too ready credulity. Artful appeals to their benevo-

lence to lend a helping hand in dispensing relief to the sufferer find with them a ready response, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" hence the certificates and testimonials of distinguished clergymen, which are found in the advertisements of every nostrum vender that are seen in the public newspapers of the day. If the statements which have appeared at sundry times, avouched by respectable clergyman, were true, all diseases should vanish from the earth, for we should have a remedy for every complaint!

Have we not a right, then, to call upon all such to withhold in future—to consider well before they lend their names and influence in such a cause,—to abstain, lest they certify as true what experience has shown will most probably turn out to be false? In my humble opinion, it is their solemn duty to take care that truth, humanity, and their own characters do not suffer by their presumptuously undertaking to decide questions of which they are almost necessarily ignorant. In nothing is a wholesome skepticism more necessary, than in judging of the effects of medicines by the progress and results of the cases in which they are employed. How much the natural restorative powers of the system are aided by the medicine, how much they are embarrassed by it, and how much is accomplished in despite of it, are questions of the most difficult solution, and those unaccustomed to such investigations are surely not the best qualified to unravel the clew.

It would be a curious as well as an amusing task to collect together from the records of antiquity the more remarkable instances of credulity on this subject. Credulity has been defined "*belief without reason;*" and yet, how often have wise men been its dupes, in matters relating to the cure of diseases! Such an exhibition would indeed afford but a a sorry argument in support of man's proud claim to be considered as a rational being!

But why should we go to antiquity for proofs on this point! Does not modern time, and even our own day, afford the most abundant evidence? Who were the patrons of Solomon,

and of St. John Long, of London? Illiterate labourers and journeymen mechanics? Not at all. They were Princes, Royal Dukes, and nobles of the realm—rich merchants, bankers, learned barristers, bishops, and polite courtiers! Who were the disciples of Perkins? People of the same stamp! And as to the mass, there never has been a pill or a panacea offered to the public that had not plenty to attest its universal curative powers from their own experience; nor has there ever been a hypothesis so absurd, or a conceit so ridiculous, that plenty were not found ready to subscribe to its dogmas. In ancient times, popular conceits of this kind lasted many years, and sometimes for ages. Such was the case with talismans and amulets, charms, and, at a later period, the royal touch for the cure of Kings'-evil. Of late years, however, such conceits have been more evanescent. People have grown more inquisitive; and absurdities of all kinds, although perhaps warmly embraced for the moment, sooner explode in the blaze of general intelligence. But the ingenuity of the age keeps pace with the march of knowledge; and now, instead of fading away, as it were, in the twilight of time, one species of quackery is but the harbinger of another, and thus, in rapid succession, they crowd each other out of view. At the present moment, Thompsonism, Homœopathy and Hydropathy are the gaunt spectres that stalk across the stage in this community.

The first of these is endemic to the country—all the benefits and all the glory of it are our own!—It is purely American, and there are none to dispute the honour with us. But, alas! it is in the last stage of a rapid decline, and not even lobelia or cayenne can save it! According to its doctrines, life is heat, and heat is life! but the heat and the life are well nigh extinguished, and soon, very soon, there will be found "none so poor to do it reverence!"

Homœopathy, as its founder has boastfully denominated his doctrine, is one of the intangible, incalculable and altogether subtile conceits, that ever and anon come teeming

forth from the mind of imaginative Germany. What says the oracle? "*Similia similibus curantur*"—Like cures like! How simple! How captivating! So brief, and yet so comprehensive! Unfortunately for the fame of its father—if indeed he be anything but god-father—it is neither altogether new, nor altogether true. It teaches, that in order to cure diseases we must endeavor to aggravate them. Instead of administering something to counteract morbid action, our remedy must be something that will produce a condition as nearly as possible identical with that which already exists! If a part suffer from pain, we must not soothe it, but give something that will cause a little pain of the same kind. If a part be too cold, cool it; if too hot, heat it more. If a man have the colic, give him something that will cause pain in the bowels. In short, all diseases, without an exception, must be *aggravated* in order to be cured! Fortunately for the patients of this class of practitioners, the means they employ are little, very little, and therefore little adapted to the end proposed.

Of all the humbugs, to use a familiar term, that ever was invented to test the powers of credulity, homœopathy, in practice, as explained in homœopathic language, is the greatest—the greatest, to borrow an idea from it, and from *it* alone,—because it is the least! The axiom that the whole is greater than a part is, in homœopathy, completely inverted, and a part, a very small part, is mightier than the whole, just in the ratio in which it is small! The smaller the dose you administer the greater the effect produced!

Dr. Black, author of the "Principles and Practice of Homœopathy," one of the ablest and most orthodox of the writers on the subject, says: "The trituration of medicines with another vehicle led Hahnemann to discover that certain substances, such as gold, platinum, chalk, charcoal, lycopodium, &c., which in their natural state possess little or no action upon the human economy, become, after trituration, possessed of great power, and can be employed as very valuable medicines. These latter facts led him to sup-

pose these medicinal dilutions to be *absolute increments of power*, and therefore that the 30th dilution is a sufficient dose, and the best adapted to *all cases*. So much did he see the efficacy of trituration, that he warns us against exalting too much the latent virtue of medicines."—That is, in plain English, beware of making the dose of your medicine too small, lest you render it *too powerful!*

Homœopathic writers and practitioners generally concur, in this country, as well as those of the true faith in Europe, in advising the decillionth part of a grain as the proper dose of a medicine, whatever it may be. Now, as these dilutions are "the *increments of power*," according to the founder of this school of philosophers—if, most unhappily, in preparing a dose, the operator should chance to triturate or dilute the article once more than thirty times, so that some millions *less* than the decillionth of a grain should be contained in a dose of chalk or charcoal, what an awful catastrophe would ensue!

When speaking of these infinitesimal doses, it is difficult, nay, almost impossible to convey to the mind any correct or adequate knowledge of what is meant. It requires something tangible—something figurative at least—something that can be compared as object with object. This difficulty the homœopathists themselves acknowledge, and various individuals among them have devised illustrations to meet it. Thus Dr. Black has supplied us with the following: "Proceeding," says he, "on the moderate assumption, that by each trituration the particles are reduced to the hundredth part of their previous size, we shall find the surface of a medicine originally a cube of an inch, will become, at the third trituration, equal to two square miles; at the fifth, to the Austrian dominions; at the sixth, to the area of Asia and Africa together; and at the ninth, to the united snperficies of the sun, the planets, and their moons!"

Dr. Paris's illustration is to the same effect. "Suppose, then," he remarks, "that every inhabitant on the face of the globe were to take this homœopathic dose every second of

time, six thousand years must elapse before a single grain could be consumed !"

"To explain the truly unheard of fact of the efficacy of his attenuations," says Jahr, "Hahnemann has endeavored to set down as a principle, that the more we destroy the material parts of a substance, so much the more we develope or loosen the dynamic force, or, in other words, the *spirit* of the medicine; and that, to augment the energy of preparations to an incredible extent, we have only to carry them from attenuation to attenuation, in submitting them at the same time to a great number of triturations and shakes." These *shakes*, according to the great founder of small things, is prodigiously efficacious in loosening the *spirit*, or *immaterial* part of a medicinal substance. "There was a time," says Jahr, "when Hahnemann, for fear of giving *too great* force to his preparations, advised to give each attenuation only one or two shakes, whilst, at present, he counsels the contrary; that is to say, to give each attenuation a considerable number of shakes,,(2 to 300) so as to be sure of obtaining preparations sufficiently efficacious."

Now if these *shakes* produce such wonderful effects in "loosening the *spirit*," what must be the potency of the globules and solutions employed by the homœopathists in this country, who import their preparations almost wholly from Germany? Surely, if shaking is so important, they must be vastly powerful after the rough-and-tumble shaking they receive from the hand of old Neptune!

Some of you may be curious to know how these wonderful attenuations are obtained, since, as it is alleged, there is not pure water enough in all the fountains of the earth in which to dissolve a single grain, so that a drop may not contain more than a homœopathic dose. The plan is this. A grain of the medicine, whatever it be, whether "chalk, charcoal, or lycopodium," is triturated, after a certain fashion, with 100 grains of the sugar of milk; one grain of this, which is called the *first* attenuation, is then mix-

ed or triturated with another hundred grains of sugar of milk, the other 99 grains being thrown away; this constitutes the *second* attenuation; and, in this manner, the process, according to certain forms which are laid down in their books, is carried as far as the 30th, and, by some, much beyond that, before a grain of the required strength is procured. Solutions are made by diluting a drop of some tincture in a hundred drops of alcohol, or pure water, and proceeding as in the other case, until a decillionth of the primitive drop is obtained.

If you ask a practitioner of this school to explain how it is that such minute doses can materially affect the system, the only answer you will get is, that he does not know;—he only knows that his patients get well *after* taking the medicine; as if all who do not take medicine when sick must necessarily die, or that all who do take homœopathic medicine get well—neither of which of course is true. And this is the kind of argument employed to delude the followers of this absurd system. "This species of delusion," says Dr. Paris, "from mistaking the *post hoc* for the *propter hoc* always reminds me of the story of the Florentine quack, who gave the countryman six pills, which were to enable him to find his lost ass; the pills beginning to operate obliged him to retire into the wood, where he found his ass. The clown soon spread a report of the wonderful success of the quack, who, in consequence, reaped an ample reward from the proprietors of strayed cattle." Whether quacks continue to reap ample rewards from proprietors of strayed cattle or not, is immaterial. They certainly do from the proprietors of strayed intellects.

It is one of the dogmas of the homœopathists, that a medicine operates only when the peculiar susceptibility to its action is developed by disease; and yet, in the face of the assumption, their knowledge of the properties of medicines, of all kinds, is professed to be derived from experiments made upon themselves and others while in perfect health!

"To the opponents of homœopathy who endeavour to prove," says Dr. Black, "the inefficiency of our remedies by the argument, 'that a healthy man may devour the contents of a whole pocket-case of homœopathic medicines without feeling the least alteration,' to this Brobdignag-like feat we reply, that the peculiarity of these remedies is not to operate on the healthy, but only upon individuals whose diseases bear to them a specific relation and affinity."

Although this doctrine is, as already remarked, in flat contradiction to their own precepts and practice, it is one of too great convenience to be readily dispensed with—an instrument too valuable in cutting the gordian knot of argument. An instance of its utility in helping one of the craft out of a difficulty, is said to have occurred inthis city not long since. A lady, the patient of a practitioner of this class, went to his office to consult him in her own case, and received a packet of powders, with directions to dissolve one in a tumbler of water, to take a tea-spoonful of the solution twice a day, to note its effects carefully. On arriving at home, she placed the packet on a tolerably high mantel in the parlour, while she proceeded to the kitchen to obtain the water. A spoiled child, some four or five years old, observed with what especial care his mother deposited the treasure, and, with the curiosity natural to his age, determined to embrace the opportunity presented by her absence to see what it contained; so, climbing upon a chair to the place where it was, he took down the packet, opened it, took out a powder, tasted it, and finding it sweet, swallowed it; and so of all the rest! At the moment of finishing the last powder, his mother entered the room. It is not necessary to describe the scene that presented itself—the smiling unconsciousness of the victim, and the consternation and distress of the parent. With a mother's instinct, she flew to the doctor's office, which she had left but a short half hour before, and with terror pourtrayed in every feature, told him what had happened, that, "little Tommy had eaten all the

powders!" "What! Tommy eat all the powders!" responded the doctor, not knowing at the moment what to say. "Yes, doctor, and for God's sake tell me what to do!" The doctor, still at a loss what to do or say, repeated the exclamation—"Tommy eat all the powders!" scratching his head the while. "Yes doctor, dear doctor, do tell me what to do," said the agonized mother. Fortunately, by this time the doctor had regained his composure, and recollecting the fundamental law of homœopathy, the answer was at hand; so, with the happiest expression of face imaginable, he exclaimed: "Ah ha! Madam, don't be frightened! don't be frightened! that is the peculiarity of our medicine; it always cures the sick, but never affects the well—it won't hurt your child!" For once, at least, the doctor's prognosis was right:—it *did not* hurt the child.

One who has never looked into a homœopathic treatise on medicine, can have no conception of the ridiculous nonsense which such works contain. The following practical directions and remarks, taken from the last edition (1845) of "*C. Hering's Domestic Physician*," will afford you some idea of what such works consist.

Vexation. "If grieve (grief) or shame is the consequence of vexation, give Ign. (Ignatia.) If followed by chills, and *the patient remains cross*, give Bry. (Bryonia Alba.) Should Bry. not suffice, give Nux Vom. (Nux Vomica.) If the vexation is accompanied by *just indignation* and abhorrence of the occurrence which induced it—if he rejects everything that is offered to him, give Staph. (Staphysagria.) Cham. (Chamomilla vulgaris,) generally answers best when the vexation is attended with violent fits of anger and great heat," etc. * * * * *

"If a person has drunk much chamomile tea, and has afterwards been vexed, or if he has taken, improperly, chamomile tea for the fever, give Cof. (Coffea cruda;) and if this does not relieve, give Nux Vom. If, after this, pains

still remain, give Cham. *If the patient is naturally of a mild disposition*, and Cham. does not effect a perfect cure, give Puls." (Pulsatilla.)

Anger. "When persons of violent temper feel unwell, after having been in a passion, give Nux Vom. *If the anger be attended by a just indignation*, and the person is not of a sanguine temperament, give Staph." [Unfortunately, the learned author has neglected to tell us how to proceed when the patient's indignation is *unjust*.] "If anger and vexation produce mental alienation, give Plat. When little *children get into so violent a rage as to lose their breath, or fall into convulsions, give Cham. If they shriek and weep violently, with frequent attacks of coughing, give Arn.* If they continue to cry, *and will not be pacified*, give Bell. (Belladonna,) and if this does no good, Hep. (Hepar. Sulphuris Calcis;) the latter medicine but once."

Nearly sixteen pages of the precious volume are devoted to the subject of "*tooth-ache.*" I will quote but a few passages, although the whole is particularly rich and deserving of perusal.

"The worst of all common remedies is opium or laudanum, because it is *always injurious.* Pains which have been removed by opium are sure to return with two-fold violence *some time or other.* But very seldom is it the true remedy, and *when it is*, it is better to tie a piece of opium of the size of a pea on the outside of the cheek."

After enumerating a vast number of remedies to be employed when the tooth aches "from smoking," "drinking coffee," "drinking wine," "drinking wine of any kind," "eating," "after eating," "some time after eating," "when moving the mouth," "when chewing," "when biting," "when touched," "when touched with the tongue," "when sitting," "when lying down," "when awaking," "when going to sleep," "in the morning," "in the afternoon," "towards evening," "in the evening," "when there is a

noise," "when addressed by others," "with vexation," "when thinking," "when reading," etc. etc., we read as follows:

"*Ign.* (Ignatia.) When the foregoing remedies seemed to answer, but the disposition of the patient is more tender and sensitive, soft and quiet, sometimes cheerful, sometimes rather inclined to cry; particularly for persons who fret much; answers when the jaw-teeth feel as if crushed; when there is a rooting pain in the incisors, and there is a pain as from *excoriation in all the teeth;* worse after drinking coffee, smoking, after dinner, in the evening, after lying down, in the morning when waking."

The following information is particularly consolatory for all those who happen to be afflicted with this plague of plagues: "It ought to be observed that one globule taken on the tongue, when it is the proper remedy; or, *when the case is very bad*, mere smelling of the cork of the phial will give the patient relief!"

I have cited these passages for your information, because they proceed from one who is acknowledged as high authority by the homœopathists of Europe as well as America—as the Magnus Apollo, indeed, in this country.

How such silly conceits and such a do-nothing practice should have succeeded, even for a short time, to gull so many individuals, would be truly surprising if we did not know the natural tendency of the human mind towards the novel and the marvellous, and the unscrupulous spirit of charlatanery. It is, if not impossible, certainly in the highest degree improbable, that the doses professed to be given by homœopathists can cause any material change, except by mental impression, in the functions of the body in health or disease. In some instances we know, however, that while professing to give *homœopathic*, they actually administer *heroic* doses, and claim the results as the fruits of their system. This is, of course, a trick, and a not very uncommon trick either. Not many months since, Dr. Forbes, of London, published an elaborate paper on this subject, in which, on the

basis of certain hospital reports, he conceded to this ridiculous procedure an equality in results with regular practice. The report chiefly relied on as proof was that of the homœopathic hospital at Vienna under the charge of a certain Dr. Fleischmann, the statistical details of which were indeed astonishing —far more favourable, in fact, than ever witnessed in some acute diseases under a much better system. This wonderful success was claimed by the able reviewer, if not as a triumph of homœopathy over allopathy, at least of what he calls *young physic* over both! But, as ought to have been anticipated by so acute and experienced an observer, the whole matter has turned out a trick—a sheer piece of knavery! Dr. George W. Balfour, who followed Fleischmann through his wards during several months at the instance of Dr. Forbes, has made a report of what he witnessed, from which it appears that Fleischmann's cases are all very well selected, carefully excluding the old and infirm, and such as in any way present an unfavourable prospect of a natural cure, whilst in other instances, patients are hurried out of the hospital as cured, who are compelled to apply the very next day for re-admission, but are *refused:* and that his doses are of the lowest grade of homœopathic dilutions. And this is the Dr. Fleischmann who is held forth by Dr. Forbes as an honorable and trustworthy man, whose reports are to be accredited as those of the most respectable hospital physicians generally—as proper data for our reasonings on this subject! The other hospital reports of this tribe I have no doubt are of a similar character.

Such, gentlemen, is homœopathy, in theory and in practice. But another Richmond is in the field, and already the command has gone forth, March! march! make way for the conqueror! Hydropathy is now the rising sun, which all must shortly worship. For this, also, we are indebted to fertile Germany; and thus far, in this country, it has been kept pure and undefiled, for I believe none but German hands have ministered at its fountains. To drink cold water by the gallon, to be enwrapped in wet bandages and to sleep

in wet sheets, are the simple and inviting luxuries which it proffers to the delicate and the valetudinarian. This lethean stream is yet but a mountain rill; in a little time, it will become a mighty torrrent, engulfing homœopathy, "*et id genus omne*," in one common fate. In South Germany, and in the Grand Dutchy of Baden, for several years past, the homœopathists, according to Dr. Mühry, have either been abandoning the name and the practice for that of "*Specific Medicine*" in large doses, or have adopted hydropathic treatment; and in this country we have examples of the same kind. Yes, gentlemen, the water cure! the water cure! will soon fill the mouths and the ears of the people, and some Schultz or Shifferdecker in Philadelphia, like Hahnemann at Kœthen, or Priessnitz at Graeffenberg, will become the Juggernaut of the multitude.

Such, my young friends, is the world. The present, in this as in other respects, is but a continuation of the past, and dawn of the future, and we may not hope that it will ever be otherwise. Credulity and a love of the marvellous on the one side, and cunning and imposture on the other, form part of the history of every age and of all nations, and it is the duty and the high privilege of the conscientious and well informed physician to shine as a bright light in the midst of the darkness that surrounds him.

It is not strange indeed that such delusions as I have mentioned should prevail among the masses of society, when we consider how incapable they are of appreciating the real condition of our science. A popular error at present, and one that does us the greatest injustice, as a contemporary has recently said, "is the idea that medicine is a system of doctrines and rules, which are handed down unchanged from instructor to pupil, like a religious creed, from which it is rank heresy to swerve. This is what is meant when such terms are used as 'old-school,' 'regular system,' &c." Now, it is quite needless to argue that this is a very false and unjust view of the case. Certainly there is no lack of freedom of opinion, or latitude of doctrine in the medical profession.

Every one is at liberty to construct his own articles of faith, and to shape his practice accordingly; and so far from there being any disposition to check this freedom, we all know that the tendency has always been the reverse. The public, however, do not always so understand it. It is not considered that medicine is a progressive science: it is thought to consist of formulæ which every member feels bound to sustain as permanent fixtures, never being willing to admit that they are incomplete, nor sanctioning the least innovation"—whilst every new scheme or mode of practice which is brought forth for popular acceptance is boastfully announced as an improvement over "the old system"—over something antiquated and not in unison with the spirit of the age! How little do people who take this view of the subject know of the actual facts. Compare medicine at the present time with what it was years ago, and see what vast changes and improvements have taken place. Where are now the pestilential diseases that in former days swept over Europe, desolating provinces and depopulating cities? A better knowledge of the laws of hygiene has suspended if not banished them altogether. And what is hygiene but a branch, a very important branch, of medicine? Since the days of Sydenham, where has been the wide spread mortality that formerly attended the treatment of fevers, and especially the exanthematous? Variola, the monster-king of them all, by the discovery of Jenner is greatly shorn of its power. Even within the last quarter of a century, astonishing improvements or discoveries have been made in nearly all the branches of the science. The scalpel and the microscope have revealed to us the most hidden structures of the body, and the morbid changes effected by disease. Chemistry has not only supplied us with many invaluable agents for the cure of diseases, but it has likewise disclosed to us the essential characters of some of those diseases, so that we are better able to prevent and control them. And so it is of the rest. Every one of the branches has been enriched in

some important particulars, which time, however, will not allow me at present to enumerate.

When we consider how great are the obstacles that beset the progress of our science, instead of being discouraged we are almost astonished that so much has been gained. Truths in medicine are arrived at with far greater difficulty than in what are called the exact sciences, with which it is so unjustly compared, for the simple reason, that while they are concerned only with subjects possessed of fixed relations, in our science,—in addition to the ordinary physical laws, we have to consider the wonderful influence of vitality in preserving health, as well as in aggravating and sustaining disease. The uncertainty that belongs to medicine, of which we hear so much complaint, arises therefore from the want of that uniformity of phenomena which is so observable in the purely physical sciences. Where health and life are at stake we cannot resort to direct experiments to clear up a point in pathology or therapeutics, or seek by the same means to free our researches from doubt, as in a mere question of physics. Humanity compels us, even if there were no other obstacles in the way, to await the slow course of observation as the relations happen to present themselves to our view. In this respect medicine is certainly under great disadvantages in comparison with most other pursuits. "Ours in fact, has been an untrodden path. From the moment when Hippocrates first developed a simple truth in our science to the present time, all has been a work of original labour. Every thing has been hidden, and accessible only by tedious, patient, enduring search. Every successive truth that has bestowed glory on its discoverer and benefit on the world has been sought in the dark, and selected by the nicest skill, from amongst the mass of error and obscurity with which it was encumbered. Only those who have laboured in a mine like this can tell how hard, how self-sacrificing, is the toil to be endured ere a single truth can be called from darkness into light. No miracles have favoured us,—nothing has been revealed—everything is discovery. We have established order

where only scattered, undisclosed truths existed before---and this by our individual exertions."

Notwithstanding, however, the difficulties which have opposed its progress, medicine has made great and important advances towards perfection. Innumerable facts have been discovered and established, as far as human observation can establish any thing, relating to most of the points of interest in the science; and if many links are still wanting to constitute a perfect chain, it affords an additional incentive to the emulous investigator, and is an evidence that laurels yet remain to crown the efforts of genius and industry. The brilliant results of the last quarter of a century, warrant the anticipation of like success for the future; nay, we are encouraged to hope that our science will progress with accelerated speed, and that the time is not distant when much of the uncertainty we now deplore will cease to exist. To this end it is the duty of the physician and philanthropist to devote his utmost energies; and on your shoulders, gentlemen, with the mantle of the profession will devolve the responsibility of contributing a share—a large share I hope—to its honor and improvement.

The moment a man engages in the profession of medicine he pledges himself to do all that is in his power for the promotion of its best interests; on no other terms has he a right to participate in its honors and emoluments; and he that sullies its robes, and prostitutes its good name to base and unworthy objects, is guilty of treason,—not only to the profession into which he has been admitted, but to science and humanity. The slothful idler, who neglects his patients and does nothing for science, is sure of his reward in the insignificance that awaits him; and the creature that for his own selfish purposes crawls into the profession, and whilst nestling in its bosom, turns, serpent-like, upon those who have bestowed upon him his professional existence, is equally certain of his reward in the hatred and contempt of all honorable minds.

These, gentlemen, are most encouraging reflections:—they give us the assurance that virtue cannot be confounded with

vice—and, that they who labor for the welfare of mankind and for the glory of science will, under every circumstance, be distinguished above the mean and grovelling spirits that seek to derive advantage by assuming our name.

The delusions which prevail on the subject of medicine among the people, however they may affect our interest for a time, never can affect our honor. I know of no instance among the many that are on record, of a notorious quack ever rising to respectability as a man. The leper's spot is upon him, and oceans cannot obliterate the stain. Even those who employ him, among the wealthy and would-be aristocratic part of the community, rarely if ever admit him into their family circles as a companion, or make him a guest at their entertainments. How different is it with the well informed and honorable members of our profession! In polite and refined society—in all associations for the promotion of learning—and in every society for humane and benevolent objects, where the great and good of the land are, there you find them first among the foremost! It is delightful to reflect that the humblest member has it in his power, by a zealous application of his time and talents to the purposes of his profession, and by an upright and dignified course of conduct, to inspire those out of the profession with respect for his character and opinions, and that this respect always reflects advantageously upon the science and pursuits to which he is devoted. This much the profession may justly claim from all who enlist beneath its banner. Of many of you whom I have now the honor to address—ambitious, honorable, and well educated, as I know you to be—much more may be expected. Science will claim from you more than a mere enjoyment of the treasures which belong to her temple: she will demand that you also shall bring gifts to her altars.